



Testimonials for Appropriations Committee Budget Hearing H.B. No. 7027 – February 17, 2016

Dan Gurvich, Executive Director

At Neighborhood Music School in New Haven, we believe that every person has an artistic voice, and we exist to help them find it. We believe that the arts are a human right and a human need. From its origins in 1911 as a Settlement House serving new immigrants, NMS has been built on the belief that the arts transform lives and strengthen communities. Over 500 students each year rely on our free and tuition-reduced programs in music, drama and dance. We are a hub where people of all ages, races, nationalities, and economic means come together around shared learning and shared expression. We are proud to touch the lives of nearly 3,000 students each year, and to provide a livelihood for 140 exceptional teaching artists.

The ability to sustain an institution of this scope right here in Connecticut is a great point of pride, and we wouldn't be where we are today without the generous support of the state. Given our large size and the limited donor base of a smaller city, state funding is enormously important to us, and we have been able to leverage state grants to bring in additional funds and make a huge impact on our community.

Programming at Neighborhood Music School does not just create artists, it changes lives! I would like to introduce two of our students to speak first-hand about their experiences:

Good evening. My name is **Mai Chen** and I am a junior at Amity Regional High in Woodbridge. I have studied at NMS for over 10 years, and for as long as I can remember, I have been a part of its family. With the help of financial aid, I am able to study piano under Rina Kinber and the saxophone under Chris Herbert, and these mentors have guided me throughout most of my life. They taught me how to express my emotions through music and how to deal with stress that comes from school. And I have met so many brilliant and good people, many of whom I call my friends. I am extremely grateful that the financial support from NMS has given me a chance to live my life, explore my passion and make lifelong memories. This year, I earned a place in the State Regionals as one of the top 10 saxophonists in the Southern Region. I hope that you will continue to support this school that changes the lives of many young, aspiring musicians. Thank you.

Hello, my name is **Chloe McCrory** and I am a 10th grade honor student at Wilbur Cross High School in New Haven. I would like to share my experiences as a participant in the Dance Initiative program at Neighborhood Music School. I feel very honored and grateful that this free program was started at NMS because it has given me an opportunity to participate in many different types of dance classes. Before this program started, I wasn't able to take many dance classes because of the cost. My family loves the dance program at NMS so much that my siblings dance there as well. So, can you imagine the cost for multiple classes for three kids?

But thanks to Dance Initiative, I can take a lot more classes at no cost which has reduced the financial burden for my parents and given me the chance to explore many different forms of dance and expanded my range of dance skills. These skills will be very important to me in my future career as a dance studio owner. Through NMS, I have also been given opportunities to develop my leadership skills by assisting teachers in some of the jazz and tap classes. I am so thankful for the financial aid which makes it possible for me to train in a variety of dance styles at NMS. Please give funds to NMS so that financial aid students like me can keep coming to NMS!